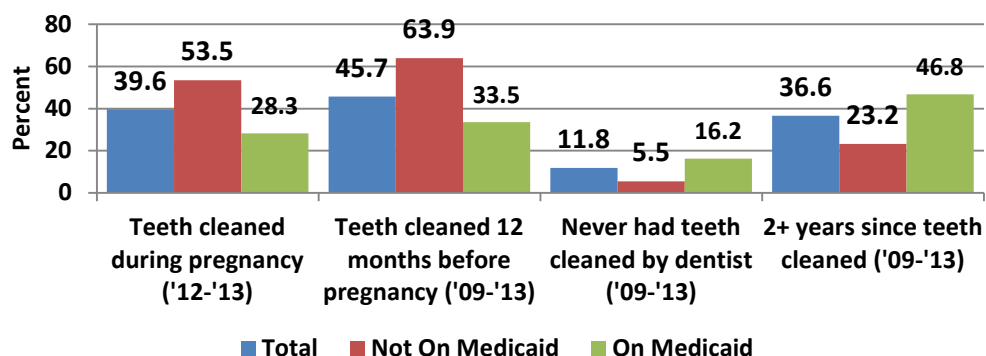




### Pregnant Women Need Dental Care: Arkansas PRAMS, 2009-2013

The American Dental Association recommends that women visit, or continue to visit, their dentist for regular semi-annual dental cleanings and examinations during any trimester of pregnancy. This is important because it is possible for the mother with dental disease to transmit the bacteria responsible for tooth decay to her infant or toddler.<sup>1</sup> The Arkansas PRAMS survey asks women who had live births about their oral health practices. Information from the women surveyed is summarized below.

Figure 1. Oral Health Status of Women at Time of PRAMS Survey



#### Summary

Only about 40% of women had their teeth cleaned during their most recent pregnancy.

Women on Medicaid are less likely than those who are not to have their teeth cleaned.

Arkansas Medicaid has covered pregnant women's dental cleanings and limited dental care since 2009.

Comments from mothers on the PRAMS survey indicate that both mothers and health care workers need to be informed about oral health benefits from Medicaid.

- For the 2012 and 2013 survey years, only about 4 out of 10 women had their teeth cleaned by a dentist or dental hygienist during their most recent pregnancy (Figure 1).
- In terms of overall oral health care (Figure 1)—
  - Only 46% of women had their teeth cleaned 12 months before their most recent pregnancy,
  - It had been 2 or more years since 37% of the women had their teeth cleaned, and
  - Twelve percent (12%) of the women had never had their teeth cleaned.
  - Women on Medicaid were less likely than those who were not on Medicaid to have received oral health care either during or before their most recent pregnancy. They were also more likely to have never had their teeth cleaned or to have gone a longer period without having their teeth cleaned (Figure 1).

#### Information Important for Doctors, Case Workers, and Nurses

- Dental care during pregnancy is safe and recommended.** All women should be encouraged to continue their regular dental visits or to see a dentist during any trimester of their pregnancy.
- Medicaid patients should be informed that Medicaid covers some dental care.
- Information on dentists that accepts Medicaid in Arkansas can be found at: <https://www.medicaid.state.ar.us/Provider/Search/Provider/ProviderSearch.aspx>

#### What is PRAMS?

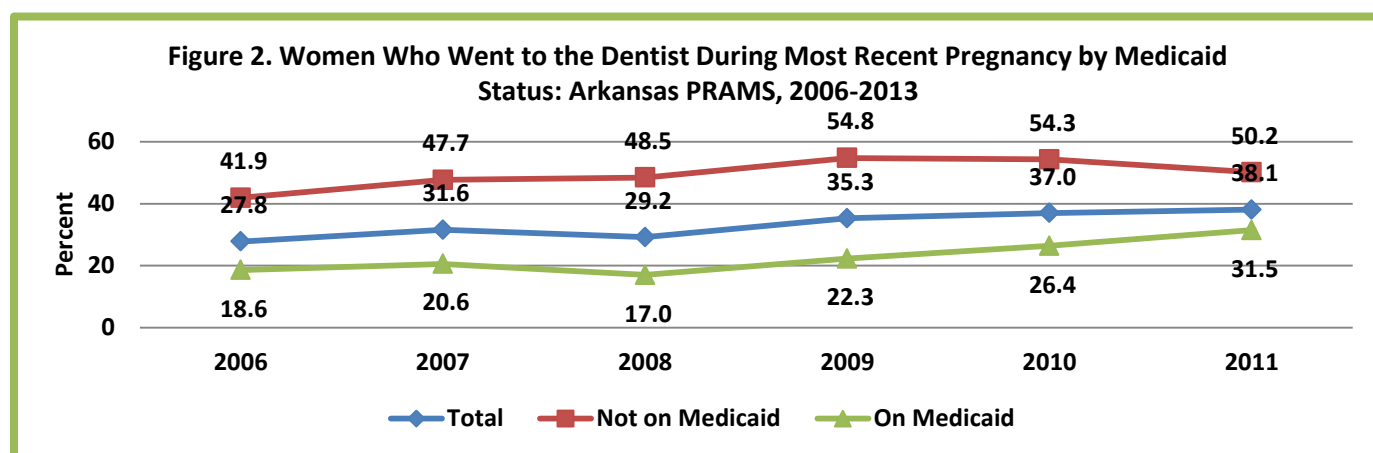
The Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) is an on-going, population-based surveillance system sponsored by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The PRAMS survey asks women who recently had a live birth about their behaviors and experiences that occurred before, during, and after pregnancy that might affect the health of their babies. For more information about PRAMS, go to the Arkansas PRAMS webpage at [www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programsServices/healthStatistics/Pages/Prams.aspx](http://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programsServices/healthStatistics/Pages/Prams.aspx) or the CDC website at [www.cdc.gov/prams](http://www.cdc.gov/prams).

## Medicaid Will Pay for Dental Services for Eligible Pregnant Women

Since 2009, pregnant women who are eligible for full Medicaid benefits can receive full Medicaid children or adult dental benefits based on their age. Examples of services available to eligible pregnant women on Medicaid include the following: 1) cleaning and exams, 2) X-rays with proper shielding, and 3) fillings, root canals or surgery to extract hopeless teeth. The use of local anesthesia (with or without vasoconstrictor) is safe during pregnancy.

### Percentage of Pregnant Women on Medicaid Who Went to the Dentist Increased from 2006-2011

The percentage of pregnant women on Medicaid who went to see a dentist increased from 19% to 31% from 2006 to 2011. This increase is likely due to the impact of the “Pregnant Women Program”<sup>2</sup> that was created by Arkansas Medicaid to provide coverage for oral health care for pregnant women beginning in 2009. A woman’s proximity to a dentist could be a potential explanation for why more women are not going to see a dentist as 31 of Arkansas’ 75 Counties have five or fewer dentists that accept Medicaid.<sup>3</sup>



### Comments Made by Women Indicate that More Education about Medicaid Dental Benefits is Needed

Statements made by women who responded to the PRAMS survey indicate that pregnant women and health care workers need to be educated about the availability of Medicaid benefits for pregnant women. Because Medicaid pays for about 66% of all deliveries in Arkansas, pregnancy is an opportune time to introduce a large number of women and their families to the importance of dental care.

#### Un-edited comments from mothers on the Arkansas PRAMS survey about dental care and pregnancy

- “A case worker told me I could not have dental treatment during my pregnancy.”
- “I did not know that Medicaid would pay for dental services during pregnancy.”

#### Acknowledgements

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Office of Oral Health

Carol Amerine, Program Support Manager,

#### References

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2. CHIP State Plan. Arkansas Medicaid Website. <https://www.medicaid.state.ar.us/download/general/units/pdqa/chipstateplan.pdf> Accessed April 25, 2016.
3. Find a dental provider. Arkansas Medicaid Website. <https://www.medicaid.state.ar.us/Provider/Search/Provider/ProviderSearch.aspx> Accessed April 25, 2016.